

ABSTRACT

THESIS: An Analysis of LGBT Youth Organizations and their Effectiveness at Reducing Anxiety and Empowering LGBT Young Adults

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PAGES: 42

To combat the depression and anxiety felt by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth, many advocates have dedicated resources to finding solutions to the difficulties these youth face. Previous literature suggests that Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) are effective at reducing the anxiety of LGBT youth. Research, however, on LGBT youth organizations is more limited because these kinds of organizations are relatively new, and still relatively limited in number. This study takes a first step toward assessing the contributions of these larger organizations for LGBT youth. Using a qualitative, semi-structured process, 17 participants of an urban, mid-western LGBT center were interviewed regarding four major areas: social support, positive peer interaction, positive adult role models, and safe spaces. Findings suggest that all four areas help reduce anxiety, and empower members similarly to what research shows for GSAs. Results from this exploration offers insights into the potential for large youth organizations to positively impact LBGT youth.